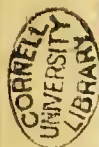


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On the Use
of
Classical Metres in English

BY
WILLIAM JOHNSON STONE
KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

London
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ON THE USE OF CLASSICAL METRES IN ENGLISH

I.

THE object of this paper will be an attempt to realize a dream, which has I suppose at one time or another been present to most of us, that classical metres might find a place in our language not merely distantly similar to that which they held in Latin and Greek, but really and actually the same, governed by rules equally strict and perfect, and producing on the ear the same pure delight. Every one who has tried has failed. Either he has thrown quantity to the winds and written lines which resemble their models only in the number of the syllables and the exaggerated beat of the verse. Or he has felt himself so trammelled by rules of quantity that he has modified them and produced a hybrid which has the merits of neither. Or finally—and rarely—he has written perfect quantitative verse, but has been so hampered by English rules of accent that his writings have hardly reached one hundred lines.

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In making this attempt I am exploring a desert white with the bones of distinguished predecessors and persistently shunned and derided by the mass of sensible Englishmen. But in the last fifty years some attempts have been made which mark to my mind clearly the direction in which the road lies, if the journey is to be taken at all, and which encourage me to hope for fellow-travellers. My hope is not very sanguine, but I think it may perhaps be possible to carry some with me as far as this:—that there is no other road and that any compromise is fatal.

Let me make my position quite clear at the outset by putting down my convictions on certain controversial points. I believe then—

1. That accent hardly differs at all now and in classical times, and that if it differs the difference is in degree, not in kind.

2. That classical writers did not deliberately in reading make their verses read themselves, in the meaning of the modern phrase, and that their words so read would have sounded as monstrous to them as the word *unexpectedly* pronounced *unéxpectédly* would sound in English.

3. That English words have a distinct quantity, to any one who will attend to it and if pronounced accurately.

4. That the accent in English does *not* lengthen the syllable at all.

5. That our English ears are so vitiated by the combined effect of reading English accentuated verse and

reading Latin and Greek without the true pronunciation or accentuation, that we are in general unable to detect quantity, and that the quantitative attempts of the greatest masters are often demonstrably unsound.

These various points will be dealt with in the course of my paper. I propose to begin by giving some account of the various attempts that have been made at different times to introduce classical metres, showing why in my opinion they have severally failed; then to examine some of the objections that have been raised generally against such attempts; and lastly to give some specimens and a suggestion for a Prosody of my own.

II.

Dr. Guest (*A History of English Rhythms*, p. 550) describes the evolution of the modern accentual from the ancient quantitative metre somewhat in this manner. Goths and Celts from the beginning probably read their Latin poets without any feeling for quantity, but, at first at all events, with a clear idea of the rhythm of the lines, by which I suppose he means the rules which govern the breaks and the cutting up of the words. Subsequently this perception was lost and the line governed by accent alone.

Here we have the distinction between ancient and modern metre very clearly expressed, and Dr. Guest is absolutely convinced, as he shows further on, of a point of some importance, that in English rhythms the metre is entirely dependent on accent, quantity making no sort of difference. I would add a corollary to this, that accent and quantity are two entirely separate things,

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neither affecting the other in the smallest degree (except indirectly as I shall note further on), and would define the difference between ancient and modern metres thus: in the one the verse scans by quantity alone, the accent being used only as an ornament, to vary the monotony: in the other functions are exactly reversed, the accent deciding the scansion, quantity giving (some of) the variety. The final result on the ear I believe to be very much the same, but whereas we attend (theoretically) to accent exclusively and are only unconsciously affected by quantity, with them the position was reversed.

I know that what I have just said will offend most people. Professor Mayor, for instance, holds the belief that the ancients were like children, who, as soon as they get a rhythm into their heads, love to emphasize it. But to look upon classical metres as something more elementary than ours, seems to me a monstrous absurdity. I know too that my thesis will become more distasteful, the more it is reduced to its logical conclusion. But I want my position to be clearly understood before I examine the performances of others, and I must be forgiven if their efforts are judged by my standards in the pages that follow. It is a subject on which there has been such a singular diversity of opinion and so much inconsistency in individuals, that it is absolutely necessary to attack it with clear if rather narrow views. I shall be found to condemn scansions of words, which will seem perfectly correct to most people. I shall outrage the ears not only of the uneducated but much more,

. . .

I am afraid, of the highly cultured. But I must ask you to do an almost impossible thing, to sympathize with my views until you have reached the end.

The great movement in the direction of classical metres comes when it might have been expected, when at the Renaissance the spread of knowledge made the vast superiority at least of Latin poetry known. It died out when our own language had produced something that could counterbalance this feeling in the works of the great Elizabethan dramatists and poets. While it lasted it engaged the serious attention of the greatest *littérateurs* of the day, but it is useless to deny that it was a failure from beginning to end, and deserved all the ridicule heaped upon it by Nash¹. Not that it was altogether misdirected. I shall be able to show, I hope, that Webbe had sound ideas on the subject, and that Fraunce produced some very pleasant verses. But its exponents had in some cases all the roughness of Ennius and in no case an approach to his correctness of scansion. Not one was able to throw away the enthrallment of accent except in partial and therefore worse than useless instances. Not one could disabuse himself of certain utterly fallacious correspondences between Latin and English, or in fact feel distinctly the quantity of the word at all. At the same time they

¹ 'The Hexamiter verse I graunt to be a Gentleman of an auncient house (so is many an English beggar) yet this Clyme of ours hee cannot thrive in; our speech is too craggy for him to set his plough in; hee goes twitching and hopping in our language like a man running upon quagmires, up the hill in one Syllable, and down the dale in another, retaining no part of that stately smooth gate which hee vaunts himselfe with amongst the Greeks and Latins.'—Nash, in *Four Letters Confuted*.

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wrote prosodies (none of which except that of Stanihurst seems to be procurable) and were really anxious to obtain definite rules of scansion.

The first attempt I can find to write accurate quantitative verse consists of two lines, written by Dr. Watson, Master of St. John's, Cambridge, and quoted by Ascham in *The Schoolmaster*:

All travellers do gladly report great prayse of Ulysses
For that he knew many men's maners and saw many cities;

which were regarded as perfect by Ascham, Gabriel Harvey, and Webbe, but in which it would not be difficult to point out false quantities:—*hē, māners, cities*. Still *travellers* is a creditable anapaest. Ascham himself appears to have made some attempts, but the inventor of the English hexameter by his own account was Gabriel Harvey, who was made a Doctor of Laws in Cambridge in 1585. This man, a person of inordinate conceit, published in 1580 his correspondence with Spenser on 'versifying,' as Spenser called it, in which he figures as the adviser and corrector of his younger friend.

In these letters it is shown quite clearly that Spenser was very much in earnest; 'Why a God's name,' he says, 'may not we as else the Greekes have the kingdome of our own language, and measure our accentres by the sounde, reserving that quantity to the verse?'—a phrase which I confess I do not understand. Moreover he talks of a prosody, which Sidney had taken from Dr. Drant (the translator of Horace) and which had been supplemented by Sidney and himself. This he is anxious to correct by comparison

with Harvey's views. His own specimens certainly leave something to be desired. Here is a translation :

That which I eate did I joy, and that which I greedily gorgèd :
As for those many goodly matters leaft I for others ;

which it is satisfactory to learn was an extempore effort made in bed. 'Goodly' is intended to scan as a spondee. So are 'matters' and 'others.' A more serious effort began :

See ye the blind-foulded pretty god, that feathered Archer,
in which we see with satisfaction a combative accent in *blind foulded* and *prétty*, but false quantities in *yē* and *feäthëred*.

The accent however was evidently a great difficulty to Spenser: *carpenter* he says must be scanned with second syllable long although it is short in speech, a significant phrase as we shall see later. This seemed to him 'like a lame gosling that draweth one leg after hir.'

I do not intend here to deal with this great stumbling-block, but I think it will be useful to notice two errors at once, which have I believe done more harm to quantitative verse than anything else. They will, to those who agree with me, condemn almost every five lines of such verse that have ever been written. The first is that of making a vowel followed by a doubled consonant long by position. Any one who considers the matter for a moment must, I am convinced, see how utterly fallacious this lengthening is. Why for instance should the first syllable of *hitting* be longer than *hit*? The doubling of a letter in English has no other purpose than the marking of the preceding vowel

as short, except where it is a survival of the Latin spelling, and in one or two cases which I shall mention presently. Moreover, where it preserves the Latin spelling, it does not of course preserve the Latin pronunciation. For it can hardly be doubted that in Latin both consonants were pronounced, as they are now in Italian, and as we pronounce them in some English words¹.

My second cardinal error is connected with the scansion of monosyllables with open vowels. There are in my opinion only three such that may be scanned short, and they only because they are proclitics. Taken by themselves they are long. They are *a*, *to*, and *the*. Yet all writers have made use of the extraordinary licence of allowing such words to be common or even short. Even Tennyson has *my* and *be* short: yet *my* is a diphthong, and *be* must be allowed by every one to combine quite differently with the next word from *the*. I believe that these two mistakes only need to be pointed out, yet it is unaccountable that they should not at least have been mentioned before.

Harvey, in his answer to his young friend 'Immerito,' expresses a desire to see the spelling of English so modified and crystallized that it may be used as a guide to scansion. How necessary was some check on the vagaries of Elizabethan spelling we shall see in Stanihurst's case. Now that our spelling is a fixed quantity, I can only say that it is a terribly unsafe guide

¹ Words like *innate*, *unnatural*, *shrilly*, *cruelly*, *dissatisfaction*, are instances where we do make the vowel long by position. There are not many such and they are easily distinguishable.

and must be kept in the background. Next he gives several specimens of his own versifying, one of which begins—

What might I call this tree? A laurell? O bonny laurell,
which allowing for every possible alteration in pronunciation can hardly have scanned accurately.

Moreover Harvey has some very amusing and trenchant things to say about *carpenter*. He ridicules all such long syllables at great length, and is finally compelled to say: 'Position neither maketh shorte nor long in our tongue, but so far as we can get hir good leave' (i. e. that of 'the vulgar and naturall Mother Prosodye'). He feels that this dictum is the deathblow of any scientific treatment of scansion, and so adds that he hopes some day that a principle equipollent and counter-vailable may be found in the English tongue. For myself I am not sanguine on this point, and fail to see that position has less force now than formerly, though Harvey has the majority on his side. It is not surprising at all events that this letter put Spenser finally out of sympathy with versifying.

Sir Philip Sidney, in spite of Harvey's own words, was not I believe indebted to him for his metrical rules. He uses *solemnise* at the end of a hexameter, which would seem to show that he did not agree with Harvey's judgement on *carpenter*. But his verses show an extraordinary perversion of natural rules. He shows a laudable desire to neglect accent, but this has been done at the expense of the true quantity of the syllables. Take the line—

'Then by my high cedars, rich rubie and only shining sun.'

Can anything be more perverse than the quantity of *shining*? I suppose if the *n* were doubled he would scan it long; for Sidney does not of course escape the doubled consonant fallacy.

Sidney's versifying was a very unsatisfactory production. But he wrote largely and was sanguine about the future of the movement. He declared his belief that English was better fitted than any other vulgar language for both sorts of versifying, the modern and the ancient.

Stanihurst's Virgil (1582) is a unique and delightful production. Its eccentricities need not detain us however. What is important is that he formulated rules of quantity, and that the combative accent is distinctly and successfully used to retard the hurrying hexameter. For all his faults Stanihurst's verses read to me more like hexameters than any others I have seen, except those in Clough's *Actaeon* and some written by Mr. James Spedding. Here are one or two random lines:—

And the godesse Juno full freight with poysoned envye.
 With thundring lightnings my carcase strongly beblasted.
 Wasd for this, mooother, that mee through danger unharmed?

But lines without false quantities are few and far between. For Stanihurst, like the majority of Englishmen, was under the fatal impression that English vowels have no fixed and unalterable quantity. He has only to double the consonant in order to lengthen the vowel, or worse still, to double the vowel. He can thus give a satisfaction to the eye, which with our limited orthography is denied us, but he is constantly offend-

ing the ear. We cannot fortunately with Stanihurst write—

Flee, fle, my sweet darling,

or—

with rounce robel hobble,

the former the beginning, the latter the end, of a hexameter; but we are most of us still under the impression that we may scan a vowel long or short as we will.

In 1586 appeared William Webbe's *Discourse on English Poetry*. He was a private tutor and a very well-read man. His opinion is very clearly stated that classical metres ought to be transferred to English. He says he is fully and certainly persuaded that if the true kind of versifying had been transplanted into English and become habitual, as the Latin was borrowed from the Greek, it would have attained as high a perfection as in any other tongue. As it is, he promises we shall not find the English words so gross and unapt, but that they will fit into metre and run thereon somewhat currently. In another place he declares that though our words cannot be forced to abide the touch of position (here we see the influence of Harvey), yet there is such a natural force or quantity in each word that it will not abide any place but one. This assurance I look upon as very valuable. It was shared as we shall see by Lord Tennyson. But in examining the quantities of words, Webbe shows all the usual weaknesses. The monosyllables are to be short, with the curious exception of 'we': and when we come to his own attempts, a translation of the two first Eclogues and a transposition of some of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* into Sapphics, there is very little

satisfaction to be found for the ear, quite apart from the extreme clumsiness of the style. Here is a Sapphic stanza :—

Shew thyself, now Cynthia, with thy cleere rayes
And behold her: never abasht be thou so;
When she spreads those beams of her heav'nly beauty, how
Thou art in a dump dasht;

which is interesting only as being framed on the Greek model. Notice the elisions, which I regard as a mistake, the shortened monosyllables, and that there is very little attempt to play accent against quantity.

One more Elizabethan experimenter and the series comes to an abrupt end. This was Abraham Fraunce, a protégé of Sidney, referred to in flattering terms by Spenser in the *Shepherd's Calendar*. I believe it is a fact that he wrote no other poetry, and his attempts are the only ones that seem to me to deserve the name of poetry at all, though they are scarcely more correct than those of his contemporaries. He wrote an account of the Nativity and the Crucifixion in what he called rhyming hexameters. The rhyme is of the suppressed order, but the verses are some of them of great beauty. I transcribe the opening ten lines :—

Christe ever-lyving, once dying, only triumphher
Over death by death; Christ Jesus mighty redeemer
Of forlorne mankynde, which led captyvyty captive
And made thraldome thrall; whose grace and mercy defensive
Merciles and graceless men sav'd; Christ lively redeemer
Of sowles oppressed with sin; Christ lovely reporter
Of good spell Gospell, Mayds son, celestial ofspring,
Emanuel, man-god, Messyas, ever abounding
With pity perpetual, with pure love, charity lively.
This Christ shall be my song and my meditation only.

There are about ten false quantities here, and there

is a tendency, which grows afterwards more marked, to emphasize the rhythm by putting a monosyllable before the break. Surely I shall find some to agree with me in picking out 'Merciles and graceless,' and 'With pity perpetual' as the most perfect beginnings in these lines, and very few I hope to say with Ben Jonson, 'Abram Francis in his English hexameters was a fool.'

Grosart, in his introduction to Fraunce, remarks: 'I do not here enter into the central matter of Fraunce's literary life—his cultivation of what he and Harvey called "English Hexameters." Touching as the endeavour and controversy did on Spenser and Sidney and other great contemporaries, surely too little attention has been given to them. . . . As a memorial of an epoch-marking experiment in English verse, which might have robbed all literature of the *Fairy Queen*—for Spenser was taken captive awhile by the Hexameter—and as containing some gleams of noble thought and feeling nobly and gravely uttered, I have pleasure in giving *Emanuel* a place in *Fuller Worthies' Miscellany*.'

With all this various talent and energy devoted to its beginning, how was it that Webbe's ideal of a gradually perfected English prosody was so far from being realized? One reason, no doubt, was the extraordinary richness of the Elizabethan age in verse of the other sort. These poor little efforts, which were besides, as a rule, not worth much attention, were completely swamped. No one who read the *Fairy Queen* could tolerate for a moment Spenser's dull, awkward hexameters. They met besides with violent opposition from Harvey's personal enemy Nash. But the two

main reasons I take to have been these. First, that they were in each case a compromise; they do not scan perfectly, and accent plays too important a part. Secondly, there were people even in those days as unconscious of the meaning of quantity and its difference from accent as the generality of people now. The extent to which this was the case I have found illustrated in a manner beyond my highest expectation in George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesie*, which appeared in 1589, in fact just at the most fruitful period of metrical experiments. Here is a man who honestly believes that the only criterion of the length of a syllable is its accent, who has in fact no suspicion of the difference between 'length of tone,' 'strength of tone,' and 'height of tone' (see Jebb, *Oed. Tyr.* lxiv).

He begins his chapter by saying that though English is not very well fitted, being a monosyllabic language, for classical feet, and though such innovations are unwelcome to wise and grave men, yet for the benefit of the young and curious he intends to show how such feet may be commodiously led into our language. For this purpose, though it may offend the ears of the over-dainty, we must keep our ordinary pronunciation, remembering to allow to every polysyllable word one long time of necessity, namely, where the accent falls. So far I followed him, though with a sinking at the heart, but what follows is outrageous: 'Wherein we would not follow the licence of the Greeks and Latines, who made not their sharpe accente any necessary prolongation of their times, but used such sillable sometimes long, sometimes short, at their pleasure.' This fantastic

misconception he afterwards modifies, but only by making matters infinitely worse. We must not, he says, attempt to model our scansion on Latin and Greek, because they did not use accent as their standard. What then was their standard? Not, as he seems to imply above, the caprice of the particular writer, but the pre-election of the first poets, who decided the matter, as he thinks, 'at their pleasure or as it fell out.' This last phrase, at first sight mysterious, he hastens to explain. Homer must be imagined as beginning his line with the word 'Penelope,' which consequently had to take the shape Pēnēlōpē, nothing in the world appearing why *pe* should be longer than *ne* or *lo*, all being equally smooth and current upon the tongue. He has a similar explanation for the scansion of the first line of the *Aeneid*; he that first put such words into verse having found, as it is to be supposed, a more sweetness to have the *a* of *cano* timed short, and the *o* of *oris* long. In fact the whole system of quantity is entirely dependent on tradition, which he compares to theological traditions of an untrustworthy sort.

I am very grateful to Puttenham for the lengths to which he has carried his principles. It seems to me that he makes the attitude of those who deny the existence of quantity in English, once for all and to the last degree absurd.

From the Elizabethans is a far cry to Robert Southey, yet we have to make the jump before any real revival takes place. I have no serious quarrel with Southey or with his very numerous imitators. I am willing to allow that he founded a school—in England at least:

the experiment had long before been tried in Germany—as he himself claims, with the words—

I first adventure, follow me who list.

For though the idea was not at all new, it was he who gave it its impulse in the simple and rational direction which it took. He adopts in fact Puttenham's suggestion that we should scan hexameter lines on accent alone. He even falls apparently into Puttenham's delightful confusion, but I am ready to believe that the mistake is only in words. He says 'the dactyl consists of one long syllable and two short ones, as exemplified in the name *Wellington*.' He does not of course mean *long* and *short*, but *accented* and *unaccented*. But I do not, as I say, wish to quarrel with Southey. His system seems to me perfectly legitimate, though it may offend the ears of many;—it was hateful, for instance, to Tennyson. It is simply this (I do not use his own words on account of the confusion noted above):—do away with quantity altogether as a basis of metre, and make every dactyl an accented and two unaccented syllables, every spondee one accented and one unaccented. This last foot, as he justly observes, is better called a trochee. The reason why a spondee is an impossibility as a basis in such verses, is explained simply by Dr. Guest (on page 551 of his book). Consecutive syllables in one word cannot both have the accent, so that a true (English) spondee is only possible with two monosyllables.

On these simple lines Southey framed his metre, and I do not deny that it has borne fruit, some of it well worth producing. But why he should trumpet it aloud

and claim to be adding something to the English language, I fail to see. An Englishman who had never read a word of Latin or Greek might perfectly well have invented such a metre and thrown in a rhyme or two into the bargain.

✓ Sing a song of sixpence, a pocket full of barley,
will make one of Southey's hexameters, a decidedly spondaic, or rather trochaic specimen, it is true. Or take these lines from Swinburne—

Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harp-string of gold,
A bitter god to follow, a beautiful god to behold?

The fatal objection to this form of verse to my mind is the incomparable ease with which lines can be reeled off, as it has not yet attained, and probably never will, the elaboration of blank verse. Coleridge found it necessary to check it by intentional harshness, so overpowering was the flow of it.

No, as used by Southey, Coleridge, Kingsley, Longfellow, Clough (in the *Bothie*), and Matthew Arnold, I have no objection to the so-called hexameter as an English metre, that is I think it perfectly legitimate. But it must not be called or compared with the classical hexameter, and must not be used, as Matthew Arnold wished it to be used, to translate Homer. When the same principles are applied to imitations of shorter and more elaborate classical metres, it becomes time for severe censorship. Coleridge's hendecasyllables, with twelve syllables to the line, and without an approach to the true scansion, must be a shock to any one acquainted with the original. Perhaps if they had been given a different

name, they might have sounded tolerable, and at least the resemblance to the classical metre would have escaped notice.

I have just alluded to Matthew Arnold's translations of Homer, and though they cannot find a place except under the Southey group, the views of so eminent an authority, expressed in one or two lectures *On Translating Homer*, cannot be overlooked. They are chiefly concerned with Homer's diction and the manner of its reproduction in English, on which points I suppose his judgement is final. But he also examines critically the various metres in which Homer has been translated, and decides that there is only one which can be used appropriately—the hexameter. This is a conclusion which I need not say I am glad to have expressed. But of what sort is the hexameter to be? Here he is quite explicit: 'They must read themselves;' in other words, the accent must be an absolute guide: the intention of the writer must never be in doubt.

This universal rule, which however he afterwards modifies to give variety to the first foot, is a perfectly sound rule for the Southey hexameter. Even for quantitative verse the intention of the writer must of course never be in doubt, nor I maintain is it, if rules of prosody be strictly observed. But we shall see presently what Calverley's opinion was of the words 'they must read themselves,' applied to imitations of classical metres. For the present I would notice one more point in Matthew Arnold's essay. He feels strongly the drawbacks of his metre: in Longfellow's

hands, he says, it is at its best elegant, at its worst lumbering. In plain words it is undignified, and though this may perhaps be overcome in some measure by using spondees—or as he ought to call them trochees—more freely, yet I think it says the last word for the Southey hexameter as in any sense an equivalent for the classical. This may surely be said without denying the beauty of many of Matthew Arnold's own lines, and more especially of those few which Dr. Hawtrey wrote.

The prophecy of a coming translator of Homer contained in these lectures was not without fruit. In the next year (1862) at least three attempts appeared. I refer to those of Dart, Herschell, and Cochrane. Two of these writers were apparently seized with certain very natural misgivings in their use of the English hexameter. Mr. Dart could not bear to scan the classical names on Southey principles, e. g. *Pēnēlōpē*. Mr. Cochrane, again, was appalled by the substitution of the trochee for the spondee, so that his verse abounds with such words as *wind-swept*, used not without success to add dignity to the verse. The misgivings of both mark a slight reaction in favour of quantitative verse; but they are entirely irrational, and are justly censured in *Macmillan's Magazine* by Dr. Whewell. Given the accentuated hexameter, Southey's rules are perfectly sound and should be obeyed implicitly. Half measures are impossible.

But it is high time to come to something which I can look upon more distinctly as a support. Hitherto my task has been very little beyond trying to expose

what I think to be fallacies and generally disagreeing with every one. But in the last half-century there have been movements which fill me with perhaps unreasonable hope that the time is at last ripe. The three bases of my column are Clough, Tennyson, and Calverley. Separately each would be a very doubtful prop, but collectively they form a solid foundation. I shall also have the pleasure of noticing my one predecessor.

Clough's short experiments are among the best, and practically unique, at least among modern writers, in one respect. He has really tried to make a scientific use of the ordinary accent to lend variety to the rhythm. Are not these two pentameters perfect?—

Pass to palace garden, pass to cities populous.
Now with mighty vessels loaded, a lordly river.

In this last verse we actually find a tacit acknowledgement that two *s*'s do not necessarily make the preceding vowel long; but, alas, he is as far as any one from seeing that they never do. How is it possible that a man should have written the above and in the same poem 'thou busy sunny river,' with the belief that the first syllable of *sunny* is longer than that of *busy* or *river*? It implies a really extraordinary clinging to a classical rule that has no sort of bearing on our language, and is the more deplorable in Clough because he trembles so on the edge of discovery. He writes *pässage*. He even coalesces consonants in different words:—

quickly will lend thee passage

is the end of one of his pentameters, and a very bad

end too. Such coalescing is a conversational licence, and *thee* is of course long. Again, we have a line beginning 'Boughs with apples laden,' perfect in my judgement; but in the same poem *uttering* as a dactyl.

I should like very much to know what Clough himself had to say about these verses of his, and what effect he intended the accent to have. He goes so far even as to end a hexameter with—

not therefore less the forest through,

which, as his lines are I think intended to be Virgilian, could not be paralleled by many lines in his model: and again with hideous perversity—

she thither arrived,

where *arrived* scans as a spondee. Though I think his quantities often very faulty, his verses are more like what I imagine classical metres were to their readers, than almost any others.

I turn with particular pleasure to Tennyson, not so much for the experiments that appear in his works as for certain *obiter dicta* to be found in *Tennyson, A Memoir*. He was a great precisian and an accurate artist, and so it is not surprising to find that he had a great hatred for hexameters of the Southey class and especially for those of the Germans. He insisted on rigid adherence to the proper scansion of a word in any attempt at classical metre, and it is his authority that I have found most encouraging in plunging into this subject.

He has left three poems, in elegiacs, in hendecasyllables, and in alcaics, very carefully and accurately worked out, not to mention *Boadicea*, which has only

a distant resemblance to galliambics and does not conform to strict rules of scansion¹. They do not give me very much satisfaction. We know that Tennyson in reading his poems emphasized the beat of the verse in a way that would have been found intolerable in any one else. It is strictly in accordance with this principle that his metrical experiments have the accents consistently, with only one or two exceptions, coinciding with the metrical ictus. This method must, I think, be fatal, both on account of the monotony and the extreme difficulty of writing it. More than half the polysyllabic words in the English language would have to be tabooed.

But it is evident that to Tennyson's ear there was something grotesque in such lines as I shall later on inflict on you. He seems to have attempted them, but only in a playful spirit: he thought that even quantitative hexameters were as a rule fit only for comic subjects. Lord Tennyson quotes the conclusion of an alcaic stanza—

Thine early rising well repaid thee,
Munificently rewarded artist,

where it is a relief to find one combative accent; and this pentameter—

All men alike hate slops, particularly gruel,

which very nearly reduces me to tears, not because of the base uses to which he is putting my metre, but because he scans *gruel* with the *u* short, one of the most persistent and easily traceable blunders. As a fact

¹ Calverley notes that the words 'tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, gentleman, apothecary,' make a correct Tennysonian galliambic.

I believe there is no accented vowel before another vowel that is short. But I shall have occasion to deal with this later. Coleridge's well-known couplet is corrected by Tennyson to—

Up springs hexameter with might as a mountain ariseth :
Lightly the fountain falls, lightly the pentameter ;

which scans perfectly, but I would ask whether the fault is not the excessive insistence on the rhythm, and whether the ancients were not right in their rule about a monosyllable before the break.

On page 231 of the second volume we find Tennyson's assertion that he believed he knew the quantity of every word in the English language except *scissors*. It is this assertion that is most valuable to me in Tennyson's remarks on the subject. I believe with him that every syllable in the English language has a definite quantitative value apart altogether from accent. But why this grotesque exception—'except scissors'—? I think it probable that, as in the case of *gruel* mentioned above, he may have been entrapped by the desire of saying something whimsical. Either this is so, or else I am confronted with the dark suspicion that Tennyson was influenced by the doubling of the *s*.

Tennyson, in spite of *scissors* and *gruel*, was I am sure on the right track with regard to quantity. He has two false quantities in the words 'Time or Eternity' in the alcaic ode, and falls into the inevitable blunder of scanning *my, me, &c.*, short. Whether he was sound on the subject of doubled consonants I cannot tell. He seems to have avoided them instinctively except in the word *Catullus*, where perhaps Homeric length-

ening would be excusable. In spite of his opinion that metrical verse is comic, he has done more perhaps than any one to show that an exact English prosody is a possibility.

If Clough gives me my lead in accent, and Tennyson in quantity, Calverley is my authority in rhythm. His views are to be found in a letter to *The London Student*, published in his *Literary Remains*.

He is answering a writer, who maintained that classical translations ought to reproduce the metre of the original, instancing Tennyson's attempts as an illustration of the way in which metre should be treated in English. Calverley maintains, apart from quantity altogether, that if the verse scans itself—falls necessarily and obviously, that is, into the metre—it is *ipso facto* a bad verse from a classical standpoint. When, he says, Tennyson writes—

Calm as a mariner out in ocean,

though the scansion is unexceptional (this is untrue : Tennyson did not write and would not have written *mariner* as a dactyl), the line is condemned by one of the elementary rules of lyric scansion. He then points out that all such arbitrary rules of Latin rhythm as the rule of the caesura, of the monosyllable before the break, &c., are explicable on one ground only, and can be assigned to but one object, namely, the prevention of self-scanning verses. There is no pentameter, he notes, in the whole Latin tongue, ending in a single monosyllable.

So far, and in his criticism of such dactyls as 'trembled the,' 'Romans be,' 'turn the helm,' 'silenced

but,' he is admirable and I think unanswerable. But the page is turned and the illusion gone. He is not only out of accord with Tennyson in regard to rhythm, but in regard to quantity also. He objects to the second syllable of *organ-voiced* being scanned long, when he has just made the remark '*helm* and *realm* are as distinctly long syllables as any can be.' Why are they long except by position? In what respect then do they differ from the syllable *-ganv-* in length? *nv* retards the voice quite as much as *lm*. The answer comes only too certainly; it is because there is no accent on the second syllable of *organ*. How then, I ask in despair, does he intend to avoid insistence on rhythm, if the unaccented syllables are still to be counted short, and the accented long? If it is simply a question of not dividing the words exactly into dactyls and spondees, though that is something, surely we shall still have the verses reading themselves and the rhythm accentuated to distraction.

Later on he quotes to condemn, where I am entirely with him, the pentameter—

Joyous knight-errant of God, thirsting for labour and strife.

It is a bad enough line in all conscience, but is not wrong on Calverley's principles. I mean it would cut up naturally thus—

Joyous—knight-errant—of God—thirsting—for labour—and strife,

which is unobjectionable on Latin rules, except that the two halves balance one another with too great exactitude.

Finally let me say Calverley's own specimens do not

seem to me to differ in respect of reading themselves or in any other way from Southey's, e.g.

Shines forth every cliff and the jutting peaks of the headlands.

It will be seen that my three bases are very much in the position of a triangular duel, but they form a solid foundation. It now remains only to consider my one predecessor, who has been something of a discovery.

This is Mr. James Spedding, who in *Fraser's Magazine* for July, 1861, wrote a criticism on Matthew Arnold's lectures, especially attacking the Southey hexameter. It will be seen that my views are almost exactly in accordance with his, and the way in which his remarks were received by Matthew Arnold and Mr. Munro will at all events act as a wholesome corrective to any sanguine hope I may have entertained of carrying conviction to any one. Still he had not my triangular foundation to support him.

Here is a significant passage: '*Slumbers* is a word of two long syllables with the accent on the first; *supper* is a word of two short syllables, also with the accent on the first. *Bittern* has its first syllable short but accented, its second long but unaccented. *Quantity* is a dactyl: *quiddity* is a tribrach. *Rapidly* is a word to which we find no parallel in Latin. The degrees of length being infinite in number, there are of course many syllables which are doubtful or common. . . . But in general you can tell the quantity of every syllable at once if you will only listen for it, and may soon learn to be as much shocked by a false quantity

in English, as if you knew it to be against a written rule.

Sweetly cometh slumber, closing the o'erwearied eyelid,
is a correct Virgilian hexameter, like

Ipsa tibi blandos fundent cunabula flores.

Sweetly falleth slumber, closing the wearied eyelid,
contains two shocking false quantities.'

Further, Mr. Spedding notes the doubled consonant fallacy, observing that when we wish to distinguish between *annus* and *anus* in Latin, we do so by pronouncing *anus* like *canus*, not by pronouncing the *n* double, and are apparently satisfied with the result, so entirely is the habit of perceiving quantity lost to an Englishman. There are many excellent scholars who will read '*arma virumque cano*' with the *a* distinctly long. I believe this has an explanation beside that of Mr. Spedding, namely, a natural reaction against accented rhythm.

Mr. Spedding models his verse confessedly on Virgil, and I am confident that he has a perfect right to claim that it is exactly like Virgil's in effect. But he is also right in saying that Virgilian hexameters are almost impossible in English. Our words are not like Latin words, our accents are also very different: the Latin accent, for instance, never came on the last syllable of a word. This last fact is in itself, I think, fatal to the English Virgil. Practically every line of Virgil ends with a dactyl and a spondee in which quantity and accent coincide, as they do invariably in Mr. Spedding's lines—

Verses so modulate, so tuned, so varied in accent,
Rich with unexpected changes, smooth, stately, sonorous,

Rolling ever forward, tidelike, with thunder, in endless
 Procession, complex melodies—pause, quantity, accent
 After Virgilian precedent and practice, in order
 Distributed—could these gratify th' Etonian ear-drum?

Virgil my model is: accent, caesura, division:
 His practice regulates; his rules my quantity obeyeth.

These lines are of course quite un-English in sound. He has been at great pains to choose words which resemble Latin words in quantity and accent, and has I think been entirely successful in producing a very Virgilian effect. The second line is the best, the last two are the worst: the elision quite intolerable. There are two false quantities.

Now hear for a moment what Mr. Munro said in answer to this. He declares (in 1861) that neither his ear nor his reason recognizes 'any real distinction of quantity *except that which is produced by accented and unaccented syllables.*' This is so extraordinary to me that I despair of answering it. It seems to me pure *Puttenham*, and to require as a proper continuation a disquisition on how the Greeks came by their scansion of *Penelope*. 'Quantity,' he says, 'must be utterly discarded.' Well, at all events that is a working hypothesis, and a rule that applies to all English accentuated metres. I prefer this attitude very much to Matthew Arnold's, who is prepared to meet Mr. Spedding half-way. He says he would not scan *seventeen* as a dactyl (why not, on his own principles, I fail to see), but that he thinks most people incapable of Mr. Spedding's nicety of ear; that they would be unable to feel the difference between *quantity* and *quiddity*. I should have

thought, but for such overwhelming authority to the contrary, that there did not live a man who, if the question were fairly put to him, would fail to detect the difference.

III.

My survey is now finished, and what is the conclusion of the whole matter? It is that we must go straight to the fountain-head and model our metre not on the Latin but the Greek. I believe that our language is singularly like ancient Greek in intonation, and that we can transplant their metrical system with greater ease and with less change than was possible to the Romans. Here I have at a word brought upon myself the most difficult part of my subject, the vexed question of Greek accents. I approach this subject with the greater hesitation, because I shall find myself, as elsewhere in this paper, but here particularly, in the singular position of feeling quite convinced on a point which has apparently never even occurred to any one else, and which consequently, it is a fair guess, will not commend itself to any one who reads me.

Mr. Munro, in dealing with the Spedding heresy, states that 'the accent of the old Greeks and Romans resembled our accent only in name, in reality was essentially different.' I may be doing Mr. Munro an injustice, but I believe that the essential difference to which he refers, is fairly to be gathered from these words of Dr. Blass (*Pronunciation of Ancient Greek*, translated by W. J. Purton, p. 131):—'With regard to the accent of words it is well known that in Greek this consisted in voice-pitch, not voice-stress, and still

less voice-duration, although in both languages the latter was united with the voice-pitch in the period of their degeneration.' Further, Dr. Blass notes that 'the versification of the classical period makes no account whatever of a word-accent, and indeed, since the accent was musical, there was not the slightest reason why it should.'

Now I know I shall be looked upon as insane, but I affirm with confidence that not only does this not constitute an essential difference between Greek and English, but that these words might have been applied with equal truth to our own accents. I well remember when I was first told that Greek accents were not accents at all but only a raising of the voice, how delightful the explanation seemed to me. I was anxious, as every one is I suppose, to feel justified in reading my Homer by the metrical accent. But surely I cannot be entirely mistaken in declaring what seems to me quite undeniable, that the ordinary unemphatic English accent is exactly a raising of pitch, and nothing more. I do not mean to deny that it is possible to accent, or let me rather say to emphasize, a syllable in the other two ways, i.e. by strength or length of tone, but I assert simply that that is not the customary method of accentuation¹. If our accents are to degenerate some day into long vowels, as Dr. Blass says has happened to the Greek accents (he instances *xēnūs*

¹ The fact that it is possible, and even usual at the end of a clause, to accent by the contrary process, by lowering instead of raising the voice, does not affect my argument seriously. It is still a question of pitch and not of stress.

for ξένους, yēnītō for γένουτο), I declare confidently that such degeneration has not taken place yet. Further, Dionysius mentions that the difference between an acute and grave accent was nearly a fifth. When I say the words 'upon it,' I believe that I raise my voice about a third. There is besides the circumflex accent, which was a mean between the two. This is to be found also in English. Notice the difference of pitch with which we say *what?* and *who?* and compare it with τί; and ποῦ;

It is, I know, too much to expect that I have carried any one with me as far as this, but I would ask any candid person to make a difference of nearly a fifth between two consecutive syllables, and see if the higher note does not accent its syllable in a very distinct and I should say in a distinctively English manner. If this point be conceded, that the higher note does accent the syllable in a satisfactory manner, all that need be done to make my verses intelligible is to use such accent only in reading them, and then, according to Dr. Blass, it will not affect the scansion in the least. I confess I think to our vitiated ears it will, or rather does, affect the scansion, but I quite agree that it has no right to.

What makes the Greek accent so puzzling and sometimes so impossible to us, is not I believe that it is different, but is due to a well-known peculiarity of our vowel pronunciation. I refer to the fact that our vowels if not followed by a consonant supply themselves with a consonantal *y* or *w*¹. This has a curious but I think

¹ There is one notable exception to this rule. Syllables ending in *-aw* do not supply themselves with either a *w* or a *y*, but it is remarkable how strong the tendency is to insert an *r*.

indisputable effect on vowels followed by other vowels, namely, that if they are accented they are invariably long. The rule is thus exactly the opposite to the Latin rule. A few instances will be enough, *poet*, *pious* (cf. *impious*), *ruin*. Even when it is not accented and comes before the accent, such a vowel seems to be always long, as in *reaction*, *pre-eminent*¹. Consequently it would be impossible for us to accent, for instance, the word *αἰτία* aright without lengthening the *iota*.

I do not besides see any essential difference between the rules of Greek accentuation and such as might be formulated for English. We allow, it is true, the accent to be thrown back a syllable further; we even allow two accents on a word. But the rules about acute turning to grave and about enclitics are almost exactly the same; compare *upón it* with *upon all things*, and *to get money* with *to gét it*. Of course the three Greek accents are a very rough and unscientific way of expressing variations that extended over a fifth, and I suspect there were lesser accents on the longer words².

Furthermore, I do not see any reason for supposing that the Greek accents were lesser in degree than ours. Surely a fifth is a sufficient interval, not to mention the indirect testimony given by modern Greek to the strength and importance of the old accents. The strength of the Latin accent again is testified to in a

¹ I should like to suggest this as a possible explanation of the long *e* in the word *reficio*.

² It is I believe correct to hold the view that the Romans had two accents on their longer words, but they do not themselves mention the fact.

remarkable manner by the metres of Plautus. I intend to devote a few minutes to this, as it also has some bearing on the old *carpenter* difficulty of Spenser.

In ordinary rapid pronunciation we habitually shorten unaccented syllables, often slurring or half leaving out consonants. An extreme instance of such shortening may be seen in Clough's dactyl *silenced but*, where *ncd b* have all to be made equivalent to little more than one consonant. I think it must be conceded that such shortening argues a strong accent on the preceding syllable. Well, Plautus makes use of this shortening exactly, and that too in verses that are meant to scan, not merely to go by accent, like Clough's. I was a little upset to find some scholars declare that the metrical accent as well as the natural accent may account for such shortening; but I am convinced that this is not so, and Mr. Rawlins, whom I consulted on the point, believes that Plautus always made the two coincide, which the great roughness of his metrical system enabled him to do.

I consider that this fact may fairly be used to prove the strength of the Latin accent. I may add that all such shortening would be of course a colloquial licence, careless pronunciation being natural on the comic stage, and that though the proper accent of a word was not in any way surrendered in reading Virgil, it would not be allowed by educated Romans to shorten its neighbours, the full value being given to every syllable. My answer then to those who say that to them the second syllable of the word *carpenter* or *organ-voiced* is distinctly short, is this: You are associating your-

selves by such an admission with the vulgar actors of Plautus rather than the educated readers of Virgil. An unaccented syllable can no doubt be shortened in conversation, even to the extent of saying *dunno* for *don't know*, but is that any reason why we should do so in reading poetry?

I have said that accent does not lengthen a syllable: but has it any effect on quantity? I think it has. Its function is to preserve a syllable from conversational shortening, and I would go further and say that it preserves it also from lengthening. Far from believing that it is the accent of the verse that causes the occasional lengthening of syllables *in arsi*, I hold that it is the absence of the natural accent that allows of such lengthening. I mean in such cases as—

τίπτε Θέτι τανύπεπλε.

Tribulaque trabeaeque.

Such lengthening (at least wherever the succeeding consonant is a mute) would, I believe, be absolutely impossible if the accent were upon it; but of course I may be confuted by an instance.

This statement has a natural corollary, namely, that if you would determine the true quantity of a syllable, you should put the accent on it and it will almost invariably become evident. There is yet a further corollary, namely, that the French language, which at first sight might seem to be advantaged for classical purposes by having so little accent, suffers proportionately in the indeterminateness of its quantities.

But before leaving the subject of accent I must say

something of the metrical accent or ictus. Is there to be no accentuation of the verse, it may be asked, and if there is, how will it exist side by side with the natural accent? The answer to this is to my mind quite plain, and will I think commend itself to any one who has followed me. The verse is to be accentuated entirely at the reader's pleasure, but it must not be by voice-pitch (as it is, according to my views, in English accentuated metre) but by voice-stress, the accent which we use when we wish to emphasize a word. For I hope I may find some to agree with me that the accent of emphasis is something quite different in character from the ordinary accent. This emphatic accent, used as a metrical ictus, would be entirely distinct and might perfectly well be neighbour to the ordinary voice-pitch accent. I may say that in my opinion it ought to be very slight; over-accentuation would be similar in effect to the accenting of the syllables *dis* and *and* in the line—

Of man's first disobedience and the fruit,
a mark of childhood or lack of education. But I think such accent, however strong, need not affect the natural accent in the smallest degree, even if it come next-door to it.

I talked just now of the shortening of the second syllable in *silenced but*, and as this may perhaps leave an erroneous impression, perhaps I may be excused a short digression about the statement made at the beginning of this paper, that modern and ancient verse are both a play of accent against quantity with the positions reversed. Dr. Whewell, in an article in

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Macmillan's Magazine (1862), arguing against the view that the consonantal nature of English prevents smoothness, asks, What could be smoother than the line—

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn—?

and yet what a surprising short syllable *-censbr-* is. This proves to his mind that the English tongue has a surprising power of running rapidly over an agglomeration of consonants. It proves of course nothing of the sort, *-censbr-* being I should say not only not short, but the longest syllable in the line. It pleases the ear simply because it is a strong instance of quantity warring against accent. In my opinion this principle is exactly paralleled by the contrary process in classical metres: the word *hollow* is an English trochee on exactly the same footing as it would be a classical iambus. Why, except from inveterate habit, should the one be more easily distinguishable than the other? On this showing *silenced but* is not an illegitimate Southey dactyl (it is almost difficult to find such a thing), but a bad one.

And perhaps I may put in a further word here about words long or short by position. Just as the gradations of accent are infinite, so are the gradations of quantity. So they were to the Romans, who borrowed the Greek mute and liquid rule to mark the exact border-line between long and short. If then the differences between long and short seem in some instances extremely slight, there is no real cause for surprise. To many people it will seem absurd to make a distinction between the second syllables of *liberty* and *livery*; but

it is not more so than to distinguish between *lacerta* and *lacera*. The line must be drawn somewhere, and if the accent as I suggested be put upon these syllables as a test the difference will be found not inconsiderable.

It seems to me that it will not be here impertinent, in view of the fact that we are attempting to transplant the Greek metrical system on our own tongue, to compare the former Elizabethan attempt with the successful transplantation of the Romans. Webbe suggested this line of thought to me.

The situation was very much the same in both cases. The Romans wrote accentuated verse, the old saturnian metres, as did the Elizabethans. Like the Elizabethans, they were struck by the obvious superiority of quantitative verse almost as soon as they became acquainted with it, and proceeded to adapt their language to it. It is at this point that the parallel fails. Plautus might conceivably be cited as a transition stage, but I think we should be wrong in doing so. His is merely a simplifying and vulgarizing of the scansion as it is of the metre. Unaccented syllables that can be slurred in pronunciation he scans short, because on the comic stage such clipping would be natural and almost inevitable. But he has no doubt whatever of the true quantity of the syllables: the converse process is never found; the accent never leads him to suppose that a short syllable is long. We must take it then that the Romans from the moment that they began to write quantitative verse were never in any doubt as to the quantity of their syllables. They were transplanting a system from a language, if I may be

allowed to say so, even more different from theirs than it is from ours. Yet though it may be called an artificial product, there was none of that astonishing diversity of opinion, that amazing elasticity and inconsistency which we see in even the most conscientious of Elizabethan experimentalists.

We need not go very far to find some explanation of this really surprising difference. The Englishmen had not the advantage of hearing Greeks read their Homer, and besides, our literature had advanced considerably beyond saturnians, which made us less ready for innovation. But the true explanation is, I believe, to be found in our spelling, and in the fact that verse is to us so much a matter for the eye, which is a reason why we read classics with terrible false quantities, and mind it not in the least so long as we see the line perfect before our eyes. With rhymes, too, if we cannot hear them, we like to see them; our ancestors at all events were perfectly content with *prove* and *love*, *heath* and *breath*, and so on. Similarly, if we cannot hear the accent perpetually forcing the metre upon us, an indulgence which Southey and Longfellow seldom deny us, we like to see our double letters marking the long syllable and our single the short, even when the result is to make *shining* a pyrrhic and *shinning* a trochee. It will not be until we spell our words with a separate symbol for the long and short vowels and with no doubling of consonants at all, as in *Pitman's Phonetic Shorthand*, that the ordinary English mind will succeed in detecting a false quantity. We like for convenience' sake to think that we can use *me* and *thee* and *he* long

or short as we like. Yet, what Roman ever supposed that he might scan *tu*, *te*, or *me* short? He must, as we are, have been filled with envy, when he thought of those delightful words $\mu\epsilon$, $\sigma\epsilon$, $\sigma\upsilon$, but his judgement was unerring, his manhood unshaken. Let us emulate him and make the best of a language, which I am persuaded is more like Greek in sound than his was.

IV.

Now for one or two commonly urged objections. The commonest is perhaps that our language is too monosyllabic. Whether or not this is a serious indictment against English, I leave others to judge. What I fail to see is why it is more fatal to metrical than to ordinary verse. I shall be told perhaps that it unfits the language for the long sonorous roll of the hexameter. But there are many English metres as long as the hexameter, even if some of them be for printers' purposes divided at the caesura: for instance, let me take this line from Mr. Swinburne, which, observe, contains eight feet, iambics and anapaests mixed:—

Ere Eton arose in an age that was darkness and shone by his radiant
side.

Here there are no less than eleven monosyllables, yet I do not find that the verse halts on that account. Still I do not deny that the monosyllabic nature of English will cause an unavoidable, but not necessarily regrettable, modification of the rhythms. Monosyllabic endings, like *νεφεληγερέτα Ζεύς*, *γηθόσυννος κῆρ*, must be expected to be far more frequent. If we do not like

them at first, we must get used to them. Moreover, considering our immense number of proclitics, I think the monosyllabic nature of the language is somewhat exaggerated.

Secondly, they say that we are lamentably deficient in pure long vowels, and that two such consecutive are hardly to be found. The first of these two statements I am inclined to demur to altogether. In the line quoted above, for instance—not chosen for this purpose—there are eight pure long vowels in the eight feet, a very fair proportion, as I think. In this last clause that I have written, of seventeen words, there are ten. Here at least our monosyllables stand us in good stead, the large majority being pure long vowels. The second clause of this objection is at first sight rather significant, though a vast number of double words, such as *always*, *daylight*, *twilight*, *warfare*, *waylay*, *sea-mew*, *wheatear*, *heyday*, *seaside*, *heirloom*, will occur to any one. But it is after all due principally to the fact that ours is not an inflexional language, and I do not think it would be unfair to equate (this is such a word, by the way) *βαλῶ* with *I go*, *βαλῶν* with *he goes*, &c.

A third objection often urged is that our language is such a mass of consonants—‘too craggy,’ as Nash puts it—that the easy flow of metre is impossible. I am in a curious position with regard to this objection, because my great difficulty, mentioned above, is to persuade people that an agglomeration of consonants does retard the verse at all. Of course if the rules of quantity by *position* are continually disregarded, this ‘cragginess’ is the inevitable result, and a very proper retribution.

It seems to me that these two objections, (1) that our language is too consonantal, (2) that our consonants are not strong enough to affect quantity—are directly contradictory, and unless one is withdrawn, I do not see why I should answer either. Both I consider at least flagrant over-statements.

A further objection, if it is an objection, is the extreme difficulty of writing such verse, and the bar it would be to any freedom of thought. This difficulty would be very real. A beginner would find his path as thickly strewn with thorns as that of a boy learning Latin verses. He would make false quantities far more ghastly, and his tongue would refuse, quite rightly, to shift the accent on to the long syllable, a difficulty which does not present itself to the Latin verse writer. But practice and severe correction will in the end, I believe, make the rules of metre very little more galling than the rules of rhyme, and the feeling of victory even more enchanting. The quantity of the word will be felt at once, and its different possible positions in the verse, which is, I suppose, if we care to analyze it, the way in which such verse is written.

It might perhaps be thought that a very large proportion of English words could not be made to fit into metre at all. I can only say I have not found this the case. On Tennyson's principle it would of course be so; if the accent and the long syllable are always to coincide, we should be very severely handicapped. But on my principle comparatively speaking very few words refuse to find a place, and we should remember that the Greek dramatists were forbidden the whole class of

words in -οσύνη, and the Roman hexametrists almost all words in -tio.

There is one theory which I should like to mention before I close; for although it does not directly affect my subject, it is one indication out of many of the tendency which is setting in towards quantitative verse. In Dr. Guest's book there is a quotation from a writer in a review, who suggests that a quantitative metre might be used simultaneously with a different accentuated metre, and claims that it would give, if perhaps unconsciously, a certain pleasure to the ear. He gives as an instance a stanza of which this is the first line:—

O liquid streamlet to the main returning,

which may be read as an ordinary iambic line with feminine ending, but which at the same time scans perfectly as a sapphic. Dr. Guest looks upon the idea as purely fanciful, and indeed I believe that except to a trained ear the sapphic rhythm would pass unnoticed and unfelt: and when I say a trained ear, I do not mean that of a man acquainted with classical metres, but that of a man accustomed to read quantitative English, at present a scarcely existent personage. If this is so, I think with Dr. Guest that the effect on the ordinary reader would be absolutely nothing. Still the notion is interesting.

This part of my apologetics is now at an end, for the present at least. It has been a very pleasant work, but the language, I am conscious, suffers heavily from the phrase 'I believe,' and its synonyms—unavoidable from the unfortunate fact that the opinions expressed are

such as no one else thinks or believes—and from appeals made without any sort of confidence to unsympathetic readers. But I shall really be rewarded beyond my expectation if I attain a purely negative result, if I have induced any one to agree with me that there is no other way—no other way, that is, but to bind ourselves with a strict prosody and to conform to the rules of the metre we are engaged with. This is, I say, beyond my expectation. I shrink with horror when I picture the crowds of ready sympathizers, who, like Matthew Arnold, are prepared to meet me half-way. Believe me, there is no compromise. Reject the idea altogether, or be prepared to follow it to its logical end. No one need agree with me on any single point of prosody, but a strict prosody there must be, if the attempt is to have any sound basis at all.

The points of prosody which I am now to bring forward, do not aim at any sort of completeness. They are simply points which have occasioned me difficulty, and which I have had to decide for myself. There may be many things which have not occurred to me, and many of my conclusions to which exception will be taken. I have visions, as Webbe had, of a gradual crystallization of opinion on these various points, but for the present my own alterable views will have to serve.

V.

THREE GENERAL RULES.

I. To determine the quantity of a syllable ending in a consonant, put the accent upon it and it will generally become apparent.

2. Syllables followed by a vowel are all long unless they come after the accent of the word, e.g. *prē-eminence*, *rēaction*, *Dīana*: *piety*, *dēity*, *rūin*: *gradūal*, *immediāte*¹.

3. There is no final open vowel short in English but *y*: exceptions are certain borrowed words in -a, the words *thorough*, *borough*, &c., and *the*, *to*, *a*, which are proclitics.

Elision. Elision is by a fortunate circumstance impossible in English; I mean that we do not allow an open vowel, but insert *y* or *w*. It follows that the Homeric shortening of a long vowel before an open vowel must not be allowed in English².

Final -er. At first I was carried away by the belief that very little difference is made in English between for instance *Musa* and *muser*. But I am persuaded that the difference must be preserved. Though we do not roll the *r* the distinction is there, and in the middle of a word is quite evident; *preservation* and *bitterly* do not sound as if spelt *presavation*, *bittaly*, and, if the accent is on the syllable as in *preserve*, the fact is still more obvious.

The soft g and ch. The question presented itself whether these ought not to be regarded as double consonants, being almost equivalent to *ds* and *ts*. But *riches* takes much less time to say than *ritses*, so that I am inclined

¹ A rather doubtful point arises from this rule. Should we be right in adding as a corollary that if such syllable comes after the accent it is necessarily short, and so scan *followīng* in spite of *follow*? I am inclined to think this would be sound.

² The one case, noticed before, in which we do allow a really open vowel, though an exception to this rule, strengthens my contention. Far from coalescing the vowels in the phrase 'saw I,' we are at great pains to keep them apart, almost pausing between the two vowels.

to think that it ought to be optional, as in the case of a mute and liquid, to keep the vowel long or short before them. It was amusing to find that Stanihurst was confronted with the same difficulty, but did not find it one. He says that vowels before *g* are short, but 'soomtyme long by position, where D may be inserted, as *passage* is short, but yf you make it long *passadge* with D would be written.'

ng I am quite convinced should be regarded as a single letter, except when a hard *g* is added; thus *sñnger*, but *fñnger*. The Samoans I believe represent this sound by one symbol.

Monosyllables in -or, -ar, -air, &c., are invariably long. It is tempting to scan *for*, *or*, and *far* short, but when we compare them with the corresponding short vowels in *foreign*, *carry*, it is obvious that we cannot.

Initial long u has always a *y* sound, and must be regarded as beginning with a consonant.

Other combinations besides mute and liquid, *ch*, *g*, that leave the vowel indeterminate are mute and *y*, and mute and *w*: as *grădual*, *bětween*. This rule balances satisfactorily with *ch* and *g* rule, since for instance the scansion of *natural* will be the same whether you pronounce it *nacheral* or not.

Latin prepositions in composition. Here the indeterminateness of the unaccented vowel affords a difficulty, and our classical training makes us wish to say *prōdigious*, *prōvide*, *dēgrade*. But when we consider the words *prodigy*, *providence*, *degradation*, I think we may without hesitation scan such syllables short, except where they are obviously long, as *direct*, *precede*. At the same time

I do not think I should object for metrical purposes to such a reversion as *prēcipitous* (in spite of *precipice*), *dēciduous*.

Words in -ass, &c. This difficulty (namely, that some people give the *a* a broad sound and others a short) can only be got over by conforming to your author's pronunciation in reading. So too with other words where differences of quantity exist. But in the case of *pass*, &c., it would be better to avoid using them where they might be scanned short.

There is a great difficulty with regard to classical names, some of which have to alter their scansion. I escape, it is true, from such barbarities as Pēnēlōpē and Ěvāngēline, which are inevitable in verses of the Southey type. But I am bound in consistency to scan Catūllus, Achīlles, Priām, and we can find no place in a hexameter for Andromeda and Nausicaa (except perhaps by special licence) or Diomedes. That these quantities should offend classical scholars is, I fear, inevitable; my only defence is that we do pronounce the words so. Whether Homeric lengthening in the case of labials and spirants might be allowed, need not be discussed here. It would be a dangerous experiment in our present state of haziness about quantity.

VI.

I have said all that I have to say on the principles which I think ought to govern quantitative English verse, if it is to be written. The only proof that it can be written is to produce specimens, and the only specimens to be had are my own. I am well aware

that to prove that it is worth writing or worth reading when written is an impossibility and will remain so for many years. All that I can do now is to show you what I have done, but I cannot allow my poor little abortions to go into the world without a short preface by way of preparation for and explanation of their deformities.

My first warning is directed particularly to those who are thoroughly acquainted with classical metres. Calverley took a certain pride in the way in which he was taught to read Horace; he instances *aiisa mōri mūlier marīto*. The feeling which prompts these accents is a very proper one and arises from a dislike to emphasized metre; it is besides, in the case of Latin, not infrequently the correct accentuation. But it is only a very little step in the right direction. In spite of these little deviations (which are often demonstrable affectations) we read our authors with an eye only to the metre. We read our Homer for instance, more so than in the case of Virgil, with a very pronounced attention to metre throughout, and the effect is undeniably delightful to the ear. But I do not believe for an instant, according to Professor Mayor's children theory, that this was the way the Greeks read their lines. Consequently if the lines I am going to put before you do not read like that, it need surprise no one. They may of course be forced to do so, and might then sound pleasant enough to a person unacquainted with English, but hideous to an Englishman, as I believe our reading would be to a Greek. After all, our reading of the classics is not only accentuated

but often violates quantity as well, without its apparently affecting our ear or critical sense in the least. For instance we pronounce *pius* with the first syllable long because with the best will in the world we cannot do otherwise. Altogether I fear an acquaintance with classical metres will not necessarily be at all a good introduction to my attempts.

Now what do I require of my readers? I ask them to read my verses slowly, with the natural accent unimpaired, and with such stress as they think right on the long syllables by way of ictus. This will probably at first fail to give them any idea of the rhythm. If they cannot have the ordinary accent emphasizing the metre, they pine at least for unquestionably long syllables. This desire is quite unreasonable, because the gradations of quantity are infinite and there are syllables which may be long or short at will; but it is a desire that may be gratified. I would ask them then to combine voice-duration with voice-stress on such syllables, to exaggerate the length. Finally in very stubborn cases, if this plan fails, I ask them to read them as a schoolboy reads Virgil, with voice-pitch, voice-stress, and voice-duration all concentrated on the long syllable. Thence they may work back to the first process, that of emphasizing the rhythm by stress only.

And what after all is the underlying principle of my rhythm? I think it is compensation. You are required to balance the accent and the quantity, the accentual variety being based on quantitative uniformity. Is this so hard? If you find this so great a stumbling-block,

consider for a moment what you are required to do in reading blank verse. Of all the works of human ingenuity surely blank verse is one of the most amazing and the most perverse. Its fundamental rules are so absurdly simple that a child could produce correct lines without effort, while, for the same reason no doubt, it requires all the powers of the highest genius to make them tolerable reading. These rules moreover are so incessantly broken and in so great a variety of ways, that the greatest authorities cannot agree in the cutting up of some lines into feet. For the simple iambic are substituted the pyrrhic, the anapaest, the tribrach, the single long monosyllable, and even the trochee (which amounts to a combative accent)¹. So essentially is this extraordinary variety a principle of blank verse writing that one eminent authority (the late Mr. J. A. Symonds) declared that no system, no rule must even be looked for, the individual's satisfaction being the only criterion, and that 'it is precisely such deviation that constitutes the beauty of blank verse.' He is I believe perfectly right, but what an amazing comment this is on our proudest metre, a system whose strength consists in its lawlessness, whose beauty consists in its lack of simplicity, every day growing greater. And what is the reason for this monstrous growth? It is simply that accentuated verse is in its essence too easy and too monotonous. That is why we indulge in elaborate

¹ Take as instances of the combative accent in blank verse—

Burnt after into the bottomless pit.

Me, me only, just object of his ire.

O weep for Adonais. The quick dreams . . .

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rhymes and elaborate eccentricities of metre. The art of blank verse writing is like the art of the impressionist, the art of exceeding to the utmost limit; an art essentially without limit, without foundation, ἀμετρον, ἀσύμμετρον¹.

ODYSSEY VI. 85.

When they came to the fair-flowing river and to the
places

Where stood pools in plenty prepared, and water
abundant

Gushed up, a cure for things manifold uncleanly, the
mules were

Unyoked from the waggons, driven off to the bindweed
pastures

5 By the rushing swirling river, and the women set
about it

Unloading the waggons, carrying clothes down to the
water,

One with other striving, stepping hastily into the wash-
troughs.

When washing and rinsing were done, they brought the
linen down

On to the sea-shore, and set it all out thereupon
in rows

10 Where the pebbles thrown up by waves most thickly
abounded.

¹ Please do not let me be thought for an instant to be impugning the beauty and majesty of particular blank verses, or the astonishing power and richness imparted to what I must be forgiven for thinking so meagre an instrument by the greatest masters.

Then with anointing of oil they washed, and on the
river-bank
Took their meal, the linen drying there in the sun
hard by.
When maidens and mistress alike had wearied of
eating,
They cast from them aside their veils and fell to the
ball-play,
White-armed Nausicaa leading the measure to the 15
players :—
As the arrow-scattering goddess Artemis hunts on
a hill-side,
Or on Taygetus far-towering or Erymanthus,
Glorying in the rapid-footed hinds and hardy-footed
boars :
While many nymphs with her, all of Zeus begot aegis-
bearing,
Come to the hunt sportively ;—a pride and glory to 20
Leto :
None so tall, but she stands leader among them head
and brow ;
Easily is she known, yet is all her company god-
like.
So sported peerlessly the unwed princess among
them.
Now when she was thinking of home and soon would
have harnessed
On to the cart her mules, packing her fair finery 25
therein,
Then the goddess grey-eyed was otherwise minded
Athene ;

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For she willed Odysseus should awake and see her in
all her

Loveliness, her that among Phaeacians ruled as a
princess.

So fell it haply the ball was thrown to one of the
attendants,

30 And passed wide of her only to fall deep into the
water.

Then they shouted aloud, and great Odysseus was
awakened,

And sitting up pondered in his heart and doubted in his
mind :

‘ Ah me, in what country, to what manner of men am
I come ?

Is this people a race cruel, savage, impious, unjust,

35 Or men of hospitable, god-fearing, god-loving intent ?

For that a cry maidenly methought came shrilly about
me :

Nymphs was it haply that in their high hill-fastnesses
harbour,

Or the river-fountains among or in grassy meadow-land.

Haply am I near unto cunning-tongued man’s habi-
tations.

40 But myself will essay and see what fortune awaits
me.’

So saying did great Odysseus quit his homely dwelling-
place,

From the thick undergrowth with his huge hand
breaking a branch off,—

Leafy was it,—wherewith to put his nakedness in
hiding.

So went he, as in his might trusting a hill-bred lion
Goes, buffeted by wind and storm, all grimy, with 45
eyeballs

Glowing, among the cattle, whether oxen trail-footed or
sheep

Or among herds of wild animals; and his belly drives
him

Hungering after a sheep's carcase right into the
homestead.

So Odysseus was fain join company, naked as he was,
With delicate fair-haired maidens; for need was on 50
him sore.

And horrible to them he did appear, caked foully with
hoar-brine.

Ev'rywhither they fled those sandy promontories over;
Only the daughter of Alcinous tarried: her did Athene
Endow with courage and put away from her all trepi-
dation.

So she stood ready while Odysseus tarried inly de- 55
bating,

Doubtful if he should pray to the fair-faced maiden at
her knees,

Or should standing apart address her with honied
supplication,

Asking of her where her city lay and praying a garment.
And to him on this wise perplexed seemed it the better
way

Standing apart to address words of supplication, honied 60
words,

Lest clinging on to the knees of her he might compass
her anger.

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So began he this tale honied and purposefully worded.

‘All honour, O fair lady; whether goddess or woman
art thou ?

If thou art a goddess, one of heav’n’s almighty gover-
nors,

65 Then most nearly would I liken thee unto the huntress
Artemis of great Zeus, in form, in stateliness, in grace.

If thou be of men, that on earth have their habitation,
Thrice blessed are thy sire and thy noble mother in
thee,

Thrice blessed are thy kingly brothers ; very warmly,
well I know,

70 Beat their hearts ever in proud expectancy towards thee,
When they see so fair a blossom stepping into the
dance-ring.

But blessed exceedingly is he above all other, who shall
Lead thee home to him, in the offers of dowry prevailing.
For never in my life saw I thine equal among men,

75 Man nor yet woman ; and reverence fills me looking on
thee.

Yet once truly beside Apollo’s great Delian altar
Saw I thine image,—it was a young palm-tree springing
upward—

When thither on my journey, a noble company with me,
I was come, that journey full of manifold misfortune.

80 And on it I mind me in like manner astonished I gazed
Long ; nowhere upon earth another such sprouted ever
yet.

So now, lady, am I stricken and wonderfully fearful
How to approach thy knees : yet sore need lieth upon
me.

I was abroad days twenty the sea's wine-dark bosom
over,

All that time by waves tempestuous hunted hitherward 85
From shores Ogygian : now here my destiny lands me,
Only to meet here too some other trouble ; hardly me-
thinketh

Is my weary travail ended ; much further is in store.
Therefore have pity, lady ; to thee first I heavy-laden
Come with my entreaty ; beside thee no one of all this 90
People having their homes in this land and city know I.
Show me where to set out ; give me some rag to cover
me,

If thou cam'st hither aught of such-like furniture in
train.

And may they from above grant thee thy ev'ry desire,
Husband and happy home and likemindedness award 95
they,

That good gift ; for what better or more beautiful is
there

Than when two dwelling in one abode are at one in all
things,

Man with wife together ? Bitter hearing it is to the
loveless

But good news to the friendly, to their own selves above
all sweet.'

Then did Nausicaa white-armed thus speak him in 100
answer :—

' Good sir, inasmuch as I see no unworthiness in thee,—
Yet cometh all fortune from Zeus the Olympian himself,
Both to good and to wicked separately, to his will
according,

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And from him is this trial ; it is thy duty to bear it,—

105 Still, forasmuch as our city and our country receives
thee,

Thou shalt not lack a cloak, whereunto we will add all
things

Whatsoever suppliants praying distressful have of right.

Our city I will show, and how my countrymen are called.

Phaeacians are we that have in this fair city our home.

110 Thine handmaid is daughter of Alcinous great-hearted ;
'Tis from him only the land its might and glory deriveth.'

So she spake to him and to the maidens turned to
recall them :

'Stay, maidens, what is he ye saw that ye should avoid
him ?

Think ye this man is here among us with mischievous
intent ?

115 There breathes not, know surely, the man, nor yet will
ever be,

Who shall at all come hither bringing enmity counselling
evil

Unto the Phaeacians : so dear to the gods above are we.

We live stranded amid the crashing tumultuous ocean,

All things earthly beyond, outside the society of men.

120 Here ye see a man, of tribulation, a wandering exile,

Whom it is ours to honour ; for they belong all to the
high God,

Wayfarers and needy ; good is giving and a little thing.

So give him all that his heart craveth both of victual
and drink,

And wash him in the river, where there is a sheltering
headland.'

TWO GREEK EPIGRAMS.

I.

Came hither, Heraclitus, a word of thy death, awaking
Me to sorrow, and I thought upon how together
We would see the sun out sweet-counselling : all that
is of thee,
Dear Halicarnassian, long long ago is ashes ;
But thy nightingales will abide with us ; on them of all
things
Else the coming ravisher will not ever set his hand.

II.

One that was married unto the first man of his genera-
tion,
Queen-mother Archedice, this little earth covereth :
Child of a king, sister wife and mother of city-rulers,
Yet was her heart not turned unto wicked vanity.

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